

An Exploratory Study of EFL Learners' Use of ChatGPT for Language Learning Tasks: Experience and Perceptions

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Abstract

ChatGPT, a general-purpose intelligent chatbot developed by OpenAI, has introduced numerous opportunities and challenges in the field of language education. With its remarkable ability to generate diverse forms of text, answer questions, and provide translations within minutes, ChatGPT has become an influential tool in the era of advanced AI technology. However, to what extent ChatGPT can be used to assist students in completing language learning tasks remains largely unexplored. Against this background, this study aimed to investigate students' experiences with ChatGPT and their perceptions of its role in language learning through a small-scale qualitative study. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five students at a top-tier international university in China. Students' responses revealed that ChatGPT has the potential to serve as a valuable learning partner and aid students in completing language-related tasks. Furthermore, participants exhibited critical judgment in evaluating the quality of ideas and outputs generated by ChatGPT, as well as the ability to modify prompts to maximize learning benefits. Such critical judgment offsets the potential threats to academic integrity posed by ChatGPT. Our findings contribute to the understanding of the potential of ChatGPT in language education by adding empirical evidence from students' perspectives. This study supports the idea that ChatGPT can work as an effective tool for providing students with immediate feedback and personalized learning experiences. Such findings generate implications for future pedagogical practices in the new era by providing students with personalized guidance, designing technology-embedded language support, and developing students' lifelong learning skills (e.g., autonomy and evaluative judgment) with the support of ChatGPT.